

Message Text

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FOR UNDERSECRETARY PORTER FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, KS

SUBJECT: ROK POLITICAL TRIALS

REF: STATE 128209

1. I NOTED YOUR VERY APPROPRIATE COMMENTS TO TOGO REGARDING CONGRESSIONAL CONCERNS OVER PRESERVATION OF DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES IN ROK (PARA 4 REFTEL).

2. AS YOU KNOW, I HAVE BEEN MAKING THIS POINT PRIVATELY FOR SOME TIME IN MY DISCUSSIONS WITH ROKG LEADERS. I HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT IMPRISONMENT OF FIVE FORMER OPPOSITION ASSEMBLYMEN. THEY INCLUDE CHO YUN-HA, KIM SANG-HYON, CHO YUN-HYONG, KIM HAN-SU AND YI CHONG-NAM. FORMER ASSEMBLYMAN CHANG CHUN-HA HAS ALSO BEEN SENTENCED TO IMPRISONMENT.

3. THESE MEN ARE VICTIMS OF POLITICALLY MOTIVATED TRIALS AND HAVE BEEN CONVICTED OF ACTIVITIES WHICH EVERY KOREAN POLITICIAN ENGAGES IN AS A MATTER OF COURSE. IN MY VIEW THE ACTIONS AGAINST THESE MEN BY THE GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN POLITICALLY UNNECESSARY, UNWISE AND WITHOUT JUSTIFICATION.

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4. CHONG IL-KWON WILL BE VISITING WASHINGTON JULY 21-24 AS THE LEADER OF A PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION INVITED BY SPEAKER ALBERT. IN VIEW OF YOUR OWN CLOSE TIES WITH CHONG, I HOPE YOU WILL EXPRESS TO HIM DIRECTLY YOUR CONCERN ABOUT U.S. CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES ON REPRESSIVE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, PARTICULARLY NOTING THE CASES OF THE FORMER OPPOSITION ASSEMBLYMEN NOW IN JAIL. I HAVE TOLD CHONG OF MY PERSONAL CONCERN OVER THIS. HE SYMPATHIZED WITH MY VIEW BUT SAID THAT, FOR THE PRESENT, HE CAN DO NOTHING.

5. IN ADDITION TO ANY DISCUSSION YOU MAY HAVE WITH CHONG, I HOPE IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO ARRANGE THAT HE GETS THE SAME MESSAGE, QUIETLY BUT CLEARLY, FROM FRIENDLY U.S. CONGRESSIONAL SOURCES. SUCH A MESSAGE FROM SPEAKER ALBERT PARTICULARLY WOULD HAVE GREAT WEIGHT, GIVEN HIS FRIENDSHIP FOR, AND INTEREST IN, KOREA. IF CHONG COULD COME BACK FROM WASHINGTON WITH A CLEAR SIGNAL OF U.S. CONCERN OVER POLITICALLY REPRESSIVE ACTIONS, I BELIEVE THIS WOULD HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE PRESENT CASES OF THE IMPRISONED OPPOSITION ASSEMBLYMEN. IT WOULD ALSO HAVE A MODERATING INFLUENCE ON HOW THE ROKG HANDLES FUTURE SUCH ACTIONS.

6. I WOULD NOT EXPECT ANY DRAMATIC RESULTS, BUT INFORMAL APPROACHES IN WASHINGTON ALONG THE LINES I SUGGEST WOULD IMPRESS ON THE ROKG THAT IT MUST WEIGH THE PROPER CONCERNS OF CONGRESS AND OURSELVES OVER ROK POLITICAL ACTIONS, IF ONLY BECAUSE OF THE ROKG'S SELF-INTEREST AS A MAJOR MAP RECIPIENT.
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